

Good morning and welcome to hearing of the Committee on International Relations the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations. If this is not the earliest hearing in the history of this committee, it certainly is ONE of the earliest in years.

And I'm glad we're having it at this hour because this subject is important enough. The purpose of this hearing is being held to determine the efficacy of aid and reconstruction, specifically to ascertain whether the strategy pursued by the United States is wisely marshaling national and worldwide assets. Witnesses will address their assessment of the situation in Afghanistan in light of their particular expertise and the ongoing insurgency and narcotics challenges. The Subcommittee is interested in constructive approaches that can enhance the effectiveness of US presence and expenditures.

We have a distinguished panel of witnesses, led by former colleague, Don Ritter, who represented Pennsylvania in Congress from 1979-1992. Don Ritter has business interests, extensive contacts in and has traveled widely to Afghanistan, sometimes at his own risk. Additionally, we have a panel of scholars: specifically, Professor Barney Rubin of NYU, Dr Rick Barton of CSIS, Seth Jones of the RAND Corporation and Amit Pandya of the Center for American Progress.

I am interested in hearing our witnesses' reports about what has become of our USAID projects, whether our money has been well spent and where major shortfalls are. What is our long-range plan for our aid to Afghanistan? We need to be assured that our plan is not an ad hoc procedure for the country but a sustained, well-thought out plan for reconstruction that will set the country on a path of peace and prosperity.

This is an important hearing and an even more important endeavor for our country. Thank you for agreeing to join me in this effort and I look forward to hearing from our witnesses. I now yield to Mister DELLA-hunt for his opening statement.